

PEOPLE & THINGS

"THE best from everywhere," is the policy of the Edinburgh Festival, and I hear from its Director, Mr. Ian Hunter, that the programmes for 1954 maintain the inspired eclecticism of former years.

A minority may raise the counter-cry of "Oatcakes and Ossian!", but I think that most of us will be well content with a framework that runs from Molière to Thornton Wilder and from Rossini to Cézanne. There is, moreover, a rare unity of purpose in the many manifestations of "Homage to Diaghilev" which are to bestride the length and breadth of the Festival.

Homage to Diaghilev

IT will be twenty-five years this summer since Diaghilev died in Venice and his body was borne across the lagoon to the most poetical of cemeteries. The Edinburgh Festival is to placate his bulky and equivocal shade with the re-creation, by the Sadler's Wells company, of three of his ballets. (These are to be conducted by Ernest Ansermet, the veteran Swiss master of the orchestra whose association with Diaghilev dates from 1915.)

There will be gramophone records of music which he commissioned; and an elaborate exhibition in which furniture, photographs, clothes, designs for scenery, portraits and souvenirs of every kind will illustrate not merely the Russian Ballet itself, but its immense influence upon European art and decoration.

Monte Carlo Theatre

DIAGHILEV'S name is, of course, especially associated with the pretty little opera house at Monte Carlo in which so many of his productions were prepared. To the balletomane, the mention of this venerated theatre evokes a romantic daydream, a blend of fantasy and opulence.

But I heard last week from Miss Moira Shearer, who has just danced with the Festival Ballet in Monte Carlo, that the reality is very different—the dressing-rooms like string-cupboards, the staircases narrow and precipitous, and the illustrious boards (in Miss Shearer's words) "all bumps and ruts"; the orchestra alone retains, it would seem, the afterglow of great endeavours.

Beaver!

A DISTRESSING feature of contemporary life is the tendency of painters not to look like painters. Spade-beard and moustaches went out with du Maurier, and the successful painter of 1954 looks more like a test-pilot, or a market-gardener, or the champion jockey, than a character from "La Bohème".

Traditionalists will be delighted therefore, to learn of the high incidence of beards among the week's new R.A.s. Professor Moynihan, it is true, has shaved his off for the present; but Mr. Ruskin Spear, Mr. James Fittion, and Mr. Edward Le Bas could step on to the stage of La Scala without assistance from the wig-maker. Mr. Fittion and Mr. Spear are, in fact, champions of the hearth-rug style in beards. Mr. Le Bas, more delicate (as befits, after all, the

By ATTICUS



MR. RUSKIN SPEAR, R.A.
Beards at Burlington House.

only person known to me who has grown camellia-trees on the rooftops of Bedford Square), has a beard that tapers to a point; it is a Manet among beards, whereas the others bespeak the elder Teniers.

Transformation Scene

IT has often seemed to me that, without Mr. Felix Harbord, the London season could not really exist. For it is he, after all, who introduces that element of dazzling unreality by which a Kensington backyard is turned overnight into a baroque fairground, and an empty mansion in Knightsbridge is taken over, in the space of an afternoon, by a moss-grown multitude of mythological figures.

But now, in what is normally his off-season, Mr. Harbord has been entrusted with what is probably the most harassing commission ever offered to a *maître des papiers*—nothing less than the erection, on a waste plot on the outskirts of Sao Paulo, Brazil, of an elaborate variant of the Chateau de Marly: the whole—buildings, lake, fountains, trees, subsidiary pavilions and topiary tunnels—to be completed within sixteen days of Mr. Harbord's arrival.

Fleeting Moment

IT took well over half a century, after all, to build Versailles; but I found that Mr. Harbord and his assistant, Mr. Stanislas Terech, were facing their problems in a spirit of reasoned unconcern. It was not, they felt, for them to be less sanguine than Count Francisco Matarazzo, Jr., the Brazilian multi-millionaire who has commissioned this grandiose and ephemeral fancy in honour of the 400th anniversary of the founding of Sao Paulo and the centenary of the birth of his own grandfather.

It is only for a few hours—for the evening, in fact, of March 9—that the three thousand guests will parade beneath the rusticated orders. Marly itself trickled on for years, in conditions of ever greater discomfort.

The Farouk Sale

MOST auction sales "on the premises" take place in an atmosphere of dust and decay. The broken home, the Daumier-like circle of unsmiling dealers, the

troop of inquisitive neighbours—all remind us of the vanity and instability of human life.

Very different, I hear, was the scene at Koubbeh Palace, Cairo, at the State opening of the Farouk sale. The lawns had an Oxonian smoothness, the striped umbrellas might have been painted by Dufy, the toffee-brown battlements resounded to the strains of an invisible orchestra, and the assembled connoisseurs were regaled by *soufflés* with sticky sweet cakes. The Palace Guards were there, in full scarlet and black, but there was no question of their defending the collections from a vengeful mob. Their function was navigatory; and when the visitor had been piloted through room after glittering room he re-emerged into a scene more evocative of a hot Sunday at Ranelagh than of the aftermath of revolution.

What Offers?

FOR the benefit of those who are hoping to embellish their homes with a trophy or two from this memorable dispersal, I pass on from Messrs. Sotheby's the information that the Egyptian Government has agreed to guarantee full legal titles of ownership to all those who buy lots. Undeterred, therefore, by any fear of possible legal complications, you may forward your bids for the Neuber boxes, the James Cox architectural clock, the jewelled rattle, Field-Marshal Brauchitsch's baton, the musical automata, and the gold and diamond coffee set.

Messrs. Sotheby's cannot, however, accept orders for the oranges from the Royal kitchen-gardens which were traditionally sold, and are still sold today, at a small side door in the Koubbeh Palace.

Anglophilia

MY allusion to the tradition of eccentric dress in French newspaper life has been taken up by Sir Harry d'Avigdor-Goldsmid, who has found yet another fine specimen within the offices of "Le Figaro."

England has no stauncher admirer, among French men of letters, he tells me, than Monsieur Gerard Bauer, the president of the Académie Goncourt, whose weekly *causeries* are one of the prime attractions of "Le Figaro." Monsieur Bauer speaks very little English, but this never deters him in his visits to the antique-dealers and booksellers of English provincial towns. In London, too, he is famous for the length and enthusiasm of his interviews with tailor and hosier.

On such occasions (and often in Paris) Monsieur Bauer wears an Old Etonian tie—like as a tribute to an institution which he greatly reveres and in acknowledgment of a magic whose power remains undiminished. So flawless, however, is his dress that he has never yet been reproached for imposture.

New School Tie

HIS success in this respect reminds me of an acquaintance of mine, an authentic Etonian, who finding a tramp asleep in one of his coverts, felt bound to point out an incongruity in the visitor's costume. "I don't mind you trespassing," he said, "but I can't see why you have to wear an Old Etonian tie." At once came the unabashed answer: "Because I can't afford a new one, guv'nor."